

Empowering youths:

Youngsters should be more involved in environmental programmes and not just their own fields of study.



Special project: The rainwater harvesting project carried out in a school in Sabah, which was coordinated by MNS and sponsored by Coca-Cola.

Environmental expo for youths

Nature society and local university urge students' involvement

By LIM CHIA YING

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THE Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) is organising its inaugural youth environmental expo in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) this Sunday. The expo is part of MNS's effort to extend environmental education and awareness to youths by engaging university students.

UPM Biology department head and MNS vice-president Prof Ahmad Ismail said the expo was organised with the aim of recruiting more university students interested in environment and conservation.

"The expo will feature workshops, seminars and exhibitions," said Prof Ahmad.

"We have invited representatives from other universities to come, learn and participate in the exchange of ideas and knowledge.

"We are also expecting a fair turnout from Kelab Pencinta Alam (KPA) that are already registered with the MNS.

"At the expo, students will need to present activities that they have done in the past and what they plan to do in the coming years."

While the universities had carried out their own environmental activities in the past, those were mostly scattered, ad-hoc projects, said Prof Ahmad.

"Therefore, we are hopeful that this expo will be the official take-off for a more structured collaboration between KPA youths at university level and MNS.

He added that the chain of change must be effected from the grassroots level, starting from school-going children right up to the tertiary generation.

"The expo's main focus is education and empowerment. Without education, there can be no conservation," he said.

Prof Ahmad said KPA was first launched in 1991 with an original batch of just 12 schools in the Klang Valley.

"KPA was set up to provide students with

opportunities to put into practice what they have learnt about the environment and science, rather than merely absorbing and memorising lessons inside classrooms.

"Coordinators and teachers were appointed in every state to organise and coordinate programmes where students presented their projects.

"MNS has 13 branches throughout the country and we liaise closely with schools to identify the different forest areas they can go on learning trips.

"Over the years, different schools have carried out their own environmental work; among them wetland conservation programmes, peat swamp studies and even a rainwater harvesting project in Sabah, coordinated by MNS and sponsored by corporations.

"This is why we want to make universities the next stop for more of such projects."

He added that at universities, nature-based programmes were only available for students majoring in the courses of environmental science, biology and the like, but not for those pursuing other areas of study.

"We need to continuously build a pool of student leaders so that when they leave the university, there will always be a new batch of successors who can take charge.

"That way, environmental programmes are ensured of a continuity."

He said students could take advantage of MNS' nature education centres for their educational outings.

They include the FRIM-Shell-MNS Centre in Kepong, Boh-MNS Centre in Cameron Highlands, Rimba Ilmu UM-MNS Centre, Kuala Selangor Nature Park, Batu Caves, ecoCare Centre in Kerteh, Terengganu and the Sepang Gold Coast-MNS Environmental Interpretive Centre (EIC) in Sepang.

The MNS-UPM expo will be held from 9am to 5pm at UPM's main hall.

For details, email youthkpa@gmail.com or call 03-2287 9422 / 2283 1590.

Cultivating greater awareness:

Prof Ahmad (left) taking some students on an environmental learning trip.

